



Brussels, 28 September 2021

The Netherlands' knowledge community, represented by the Netherlands house for Education and Research - Neth-ER, has deep concerns about the 2022 European annual budget proposed by the Council. The Council foresees extensive budget cuts for the main future-oriented and knowledge-based European programmes such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Digital Europe and InvestEU. These programmes play a crucial role in reviving, developing and sustaining the European economy and in helping EU citizens grow and prosper after the still ongoing pandemic. Neth-ER highly appreciated the European Parliament's position in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Framework negotiations and urges the Parliament to stand up for European knowledge once again.

Neth-ER welcomes the Committee on Budgets' working document on the Draft Budget 2022 by Rapporteur Mr Karlo Ressler and the Committee's current position in the negotiations. Education, research and innovation are essential when it comes to tackling social, economic, health and ecological challenges. The current health crisis continues to show the importance and added value of European cooperation in RD&I and education. By reducing its available budget, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to reach the European green and digital targets. After all; less budget in 2022 inevitably means less ground breaking research proposals and projects next year, and in years to come. Without investing in digital skills, that supports a strong and flexible European workforce, or in innovative companies and start-ups, Europe's ecosystems will not be able to flourish. Furthermore, not investing in RD&I and education now, will in the long term hinder the EU's competitiveness on a global stage and will threaten its desired strategic autonomy. Neth-ER also supports the position of the Parliament when it comes to sufficient financing of the Erasmus+ programme in 2022 in order to keep the programme as inclusive as possible and to make up for missed opportunities during the pandemic.

The Council refers to the absorption capacity of the Recovery and Resilience Fund under NextGenerationEU. However, the proposed budget cut of EUR 316 million for Horizon Europe will directly affect specific actions under its three pillars, which will have a snowball effect for the actions that do get short term extra funding from the RRF. For instance, the scientific discoveries made possible by ERC grants prepare the ground for the innovations made possible by the EIC and EIT, whereas adequate investment in the clusters will lead to cross-cutting, innovative solutions for global challenges in the long term. Supporting more excellent research in 2022 generates new knowledge, leading to an even higher return of investment. Horizon Europe has proven to have an excellent absorption capacity, and is a safe, effective and smart investment.

The approach taken by the Council does not match the stated political ambitions and has the inevitable consequence of delaying the green, digital and health agenda. We call upon you to make sure that the education, research and innovation sector gets the attention, investment and support that it needs and deserves. We therefore ask you to vote against the Council's budget proposal and negotiate a budget for knowledge and innovation that is at least the amount as proposed by the Commission.